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# THE MINISTER'S CHARGE

OR

## THE APPRENTICESHIP OF LEMUEL BARKER

BY

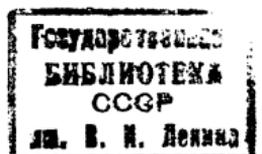
WILLIAM D. HOWELLS

AUTHOR OF "THE RISE OF SILAS LAPHAM," "A MODERN INSTANCE,"  
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I.

ON their way back to the farm-house where they were boarding, Sewell's wife reproached him for what she called his recklessness. "You had no right," she said, "to give the poor boy false hopes. You ought to have discouraged him—that would have been the most merciful way—if you knew the poetry was bad. Now, he will go on building all sorts of castles in the air on your praise, and sooner or later they will come tumbling about his ears—just to gratify your passion for saying pleasant things to people."

"I wish you had a passion for saying pleasant things to me, my dear," suggested her husband —  
evasively.

"Oh, a nice time I should have!"

"I don't know about *your* nice time, but I feel pretty certain of my own. How do you know—Oh, *do* get up, you implacable cripple!" he broke off to the lame mare he was driving, and pulled at the reins.